

Turdoides malcolmi (Sharma 2003). An albino Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus* was seen in 2005 by I.P.S. Matharu, Dy. Conservator of Forests, Bassi Wildlife Sanctuary, Chittorgarh district, Rajasthan (pers. comm. 2003). Presence of albinism in Changeable Hawk-Eagle is a new addition to birds, hence worth placing on records.

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3. PRECISE LOCALITY RECORDS OF *ERYX WHITAKERI* DAS, 1991 WITH NOTES ON SCALATION AND A COMMENT ON ITS COMMON NAME

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Das (1991) described a new erylacine snake – *Eryx whitakeri* based on a holotype collected from Mangalore (Karnataka State, India) in 1990. In 1991, this species was known to occur along the south-western coast of India – in Kerala (Cannanore); Karnataka (Mangalore and Dakshin, Kannada district); Goa (Panjim beach) and southern Maharashtra fide Das (1991). Earlier, Khaire and Khaire (1986) had reported a hybrid – *Eryx conicus* x *Eryx johnii* from Maharashtra (Alibaug, Raigad district), which, based on scalation and photographs, was identified by Das (1991) as *Eryx whitakeri*. Thakur (1998) extended the range of this species to include the Sahyadri Range of the Western Ghats (Maharashtra) without mentioning any precise localities. Whitaker and Captain (2004) also recorded it from, “sea level to at least 625 m (2050 ft) along the Western Ghats in Karnataka, Kerala, Goa and Maharashtra”, again without naming precise localities. We herein cite eight authenticated records of *Eryx whitakeri* from Maharashtra (Table 1) based on individuals that were examined by at least one of the authors, as well as notes on scalation of the species.

Although previously reported from Maharashtra, more fieldwork needs to be done to determine if indeed this species

is found throughout Maharashtra, or it is limited to higher rainfall areas.

In referring to this species, we follow Whitaker and Captain (2004) who stated that although this species would probably be assigned to *Gongylophis* (as its morphological

Table 1: Precise locality records for *Eryx whitakeri* from Maharashtra, India (based on direct observations by the authors)

Locality	District	Coordinates	Annual rainfall* (mm)
Nasapur	Pune	N 18°15", E 75°53"	700-1,000
Mulshi	Pune	N 18°31", E 73°31"	6,500
Lohagad fort	Pune	N 18°46", E 73°22"	2,000-3,000
Ambavne	Pune	N 18°12", E 73°45"	5,000-6,000
Lonavla	Pune	N 18°45", E 73°22"	4,000-5,000
Khandala	Pune	N 18°53" E 73° 21"	4,000-5,500
Kankavli	Sindhudurg	N 16°15'34.3, E 73°43'09.83	4,000-5,000
Amba Valley	Raigad	N 18°45.402, E 73°21.204	4,000-5,500

*Ref. Climate of Maharashtra state (1972) Govt. of India, Indian Meteorological Department (based on 50 years of data)

Table 2: Scalation data for Maharashtra specimens of *Eryx whitakeri*

	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	Range <i>vide</i> Das
No. of midbody scale rows	51	51	52	50-54
Scale on head and tail	Weakly keeled	–	Weakly keeled	No keels (=smooth)
Ventrals	212	217	211	201-206
Subcaudals	21	21	22	8-25
Scales between eyes	9	9	9	8-9
Scales around eyes	L11, R12	L11, R10	12	10-11
Supralabials	14	L13, R14	L 13, R 12	13-14
Anal	tripartite	tripartite	–	tripartite
Snout-vent length	810	660	–	–
Tail	45	42	–	–
Sex	female	female	female	–

Specimen from Kankavli (no. 1), Lohagad fort (no. 2) and Ambavne (no. 3) compared with corresponding data *vide* Das (1991)

characters are closer to *Gonylophis conicus* than to *Eryx johnii*). It should nonetheless be retained in *Eryx* as no supportive data has been published to the contrary.

Scalation data of three of these specimens were recorded (Table 2). Deviations from values listed by Das (1991) were: scales around the eyes - specimen no. 1: 12 on the right side and specimen no. 3: 12 on both sides (10-11 *vide* Das); supralabials - specimen no. 3: 12 on the right side (13-14 *vide* Das); ventrals - specimen no. 1: 212, specimen no. 2: 217* and specimen no. 3: 211 (201-206 *vide* Das). [*Ventrals - specimen no. 2: 213 entire, *v/s* 214-217 broken up into 3-4 scales, similar in size to those of the tripartite anal]. Specimen 1 and 3 both had scales on the head and tail that were weakly, but distinctly obtusely keeled. Specimen 3 also had weakly keeled dorsal body scales. In his original description (Das 1991) states that there are 'no keels on the scales of the dorsal surface of body including forehead'.

E. whitakeri has been called Whitaker's Sand Boa [*sic*] by Das (1997) in a Checklist of Indian Reptiles and has subsequently mostly been referred to as such. Whitaker and Captain (2004) refer to this species as Whitaker's Boa [*sic*] without noting reasons for the change. Although common names are a subjective issue and one could argue that especially since some snake classifications recognize the Erycinae or even Erycidae, Das was technically justified in naming this snake "Whitaker's Sand Boa", readers unfamiliar with snake systematics might not understand that there was indeed a valid reason for Das to use the name he did. Even

though calling this snake "Whitaker's Boa" could imply membership in the "true" boa group, Boinae, we prefer this common name. It may be noted that despite Das (1991) mentioning a juvenile female (ZSI 22152) collected from 'Panjim sea beach, 29 km west of Ponda, Goa' – a sandy area, all the specimens (including the aforementioned) have been found in areas of heavy rainfall. To users of common names, 'sand' boa suggests that this species inhabits arid or sandy areas and is a misnomer. The original common name implies nothing about habitat, but rather indicates that the species is a member of the genus of "sand boas" – as this name is used for all *Eryx* (*sensu lato*).

We opine that (when possible) a common name should aid lay people in identifying that species, be descriptive, or have some bearing to its environment and calling this snake a 'sand boa' (based on scientific classification) could mislead readers who use common names to infer that this species inhabits arid regions. As common names for Indian snakes have never been 'standardized', we leave it to readers to use whichever common name they prefer.

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